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STATE FOR WHA/AND LPETRONI
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USAID/DCHA/FFP FOR WHAMMINK AND JDWORKEN
USAID/DCHA/FFP/DP FOR JMAJERNIK, MNIMS, AND BBURNETT
COMMERCE FOR JANGLIN
TREASURY FOR SGOOCH

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TAGS: [EAID](#) [EAGR](#) [ECON](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [BL](#)
SUBJECT: BOLIVIA'S TITLE II ASSISTANCE HELPS SLASH
CHILDHOOD MALNUTRITION

SUMMARY

¶1. (U) Tens of thousands of Bolivian children, many in isolated rural areas, suffer from chronic malnutrition. Many simply lack appropriate food, while others suffer from parasites and infectious diseases that hamper the body's ability to retain nutrients. With PL 480 Title II support, administered through USAID, four non-governmental organizations are fighting the problem - with remarkable results. In the next few months, we will work to overcome a frustrating lack of media attention and increase our efforts to publicize the positive impact of Title II assistance.

BACKGROUND

¶2. (U) A recent World Food Program/GOB survey of 166 municipalities in Bolivia's nine departments indicated that 40 percent of children under five suffer from chronic malnutrition. Many simply lack appropriate food, often consuming too many carbohydrates and too few vitamins and minerals, while others suffer from parasites and infectious diseases that hamper the body's ability to retain nutrients. Of the more than 4,500 households surveyed, 63 percent fell short of recommended daily calorie intakes. The consequences of chronic malnutrition, according to child health specialists, include slowed growth, diminished learning capacity, and low future labor productivity. All of this has negative implications for children's potential to become healthy, productive adults.

¶3. (U) With support from the PL 480 Title II Food for Peace program, administered through USAID, four non-governmental

organizations are fighting the problem. The organizations' food security programs share an emphasis not just on health and nutrition, but also on income generation and natural resource management; each is marked by variations according to the organization's unique approach to aid.

14. (U) All four organizations use food aid to improve food access and utilization in Bolivia's most food insecure areas, directly supplementing the diets of young children and pregnant women and operating food for work programs, which provide food to vulnerable families in exchange for participation in local infrastructure projects. The four organizations also monetize donated commodities, using the proceeds to support basic health services, nutrition education, and agricultural extension, training, and capacity building programs. Together, the four have achieved remarkable results, assisting tens of thousands of families in hundreds of communities across Bolivia and significantly reducing childhood malnutrition.

PROGRAMS AND RESULTS

15. (U) Active in Bolivia since the mid-1980s, Save the Children today works in seven municipalities in the department of La Paz, focusing its food security strategy on 196 critical risk communities. Food Security Advisor Margarita Clark noted October 26 that an estimated 50,000 people have benefited from the organization's health and nutrition, income generation, and natural resource management programs, with 3,500 children under three participating in the organization's growth monitoring and promotion programs. The latter encourage mothers to weigh children monthly and help parents take corrective action if children fail to meet

minimum adequate weight gain standards; the programs employ volunteer monitors, nutritionists, and health promoters to educate and advise parents on improved hygienic practices, proper nutrition, and effective disease prevention. By June 2006, five years after program initiation, Save the Children had reduced chronic malnutrition among children under five from 38.3 to 32.7 percent.

16. (U) CARE Bolivia has had similar results in its two and a half years of work, cutting chronic malnutrition among children under three from 43.3 to 33.6 percent and lowering chronic malnutrition among children ages three to five from 51 to 41.4 percent. The organization works in 217 high-risk communities in several municipalities in the departments of Potosi, Tarija, and Chuquisaca, emulating Save the Children's growth monitoring and promotion programs and simultaneously working to improve access to potable water and sanitation; like Save the Children, CARE Bolivia has constructed water collection and distribution systems and built latrines and showers in several communities, thereby helping to reduce the spread of water-borne illnesses and significantly improving community health. Also like Save the Children, the organization often supports construction through Title II food for work programs, an important means of completing large-scale infrastructure projects.

17. (U) Another organization, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), is active in four critical risk municipalities in the department of Chuquisaca, distributing food aid (including flour, corn-soy blend, vegetable oil, lentils, and other products) to approximately 3,000 families per month; mothers use the provisions to ensure children achieve minimum adequate weight gains every month, as in counterparts' growth promotion programs. According to ADRA Acting Country Director Guillermo Lizarraga, this is only one component of the organization's three-pronged food security strategy, which includes income generation and natural resource management programs to ensure communities have a sustainable means of raising living standards. Thanks in part to ADRA technical assistance, an estimated 2,200 farmers in 78 communities today export sweet onions, beans, and other non-traditional crops to Europe and Japan, frequently

altering the mix of goods to respond to consumers' changing preferences. Farmers have adopted new agricultural and irrigation practices, and entire communities have benefited from resource management and land use plans designed to improve soil fertility, prevent erosion, and conserve water resources.

¶18. (U) Food for the Hungry International (FHI) has introduced similar practices in four high-risk municipalities in the departments of Cochabamba and Potosi, in many cases providing new seeds and technologies, expanding and improving irrigation systems, and assisting communities with environmental management plans. Efforts to enhance crop production, improve roads, and expand access to potable water and sanitation systems have complemented the organization's health and nutrition programs, which, like those of its counterparts, focus on reducing childhood malnutrition through growth promotion programs. In the last five years, FHI has slashed chronic malnutrition among children under five from 59 to 38 percent, assisting an estimated 3,400 children and encouraging long-term participation in community health programs.

COMMENT

¶19. (U) The Title II program aspires to be a comprehensive development program, with food and local resources supporting municipal, community, and individual efforts to enhance household food security, overcome development constraints, and achieve sustainable improvements in real income. Although food rations are distributed to vulnerable households through maternal and child health and nutrition programs, food resources are used primarily in conjunction with training and technical assistance activities that help build a foundation for sustainable development.

¶10. (U) Title II assistance has had a remarkable impact on the lives of hundreds of thousands of Bolivians, not only through health and nutrition programs, but also through income generation and natural resource management programs; today, children and their families are better nourished, former subsistence farmers are players in international markets, and communities are increasingly capable of raising their standards of living. The organizations' work has generated tangible, real results, and many have benefited.

¶11. (U) Despite its incredible success, the Title II program has received frustratingly little media attention. Maternal and child health and nutrition programs, along with efforts to boost rural incomes and improve access to water and sanitation, represent a key means of demonstrating USG interest in the health and well being of Bolivia's people; in the next few months, we will increase our efforts to publicize the positive impact of this assistance.
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